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parallel to itself or by an axial movement of the tube along the axis of the latter.

5. Device according to claim 1, characterized in that the pick-up mechanism (32) or each such mechanism is capable of being driven in continuous rotation by a motor (88), thereby effecting continuous agitation by turning the tube through a complete revolution.

6. Device according to claim 1, characterized in that the means of agitation (30) incorporate a mobile head (100) carrying the pick-up mechanism(s) (32) and which is capable of being driven in linear or rotational motion by means of a coupling arrangement (96) connected to a motor (88) with two directions of rotation.

9. Device according to claim 6, characterized in that the rotational movement of the mobile head (100) is a continuous and complete rotation in the direction of the screw-in action of the coupling arrangement (96).

10. Device according to claim 6, characterized in that it includes an arrangement for opening and closing the pick-up mechanism (32) which is capable of being actuated in a translational motion by the coupling arrangement (96) once the

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latter has arrived at a stop position at the end of the screw-out motion, with the mobile head (100) being prevented from rotating by the locking means (132, 133).

12. Device according to claim 1, characterized in that it includes a means of manual loading (82) placed in proximity to the transfer means (10) and designed to hold at least one tube (18) and to place this tube in the path of the transfer means and sampling means, when no cassette is present, to enable the collection of a sample by the sampling means (34).

14. Device according to claim 1, characterized in that the sampling means (34) include a carriage (146) supporting the piercing device and sampling needle (148), and in that the carriage is movable between a sampling position, at which the piercing device pierces the tube bung and the sampling needle draws off a total specimen quantity, and at least one distribution position at which the sampling needle expels the said total specimen quantity, or part thereof, into a receptacle such as a reagent vessel.

15. Device according to claim 1, characterized in that it additionally includes a cassette loading station (14) and a cassette unloading station (16) placed respectively upstream and downstream of the transfer means (10).